

Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

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Saturday, March 25, 2006



Martin Speaks Out

"There's so much I can do with or without the show having to be about me. If you want me on your team, use me; don't bench me."

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Ties That Bind

Amelia Pascual tends to chat up every pretty girl she meets, and then drags her youngest son J to meet the girl.

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Charter change process gets going today

By JOEY A. GABIETA, NORMAN BORDADORA, JUAN ESCANDOR JR. INQUIRER

A signature campaign to amend the Constitution began early this week and is expected to intensify when "barangay" [village] assemblies are

convened nationwide today, March 25, and again on Oct. 21, officials yesterday said.

The Department of Interior and Local Government issued Memorandum Circular 2006-25 on March 10 directing local government officials to conduct the assemblies today and on Oct. 21.

A people's initiative is one of the three modes of amending the 1987 Constitution. The others are Congress convening itself into a constituent assembly, and a constitutional convention with elected delegates.

In the people's initiative, a petition for amendments requires the signatures of at least 12 percent of the

total number of registered voters and at least 3 percent of every congressional district's registered voters.

Malacañang is apparently pushing for a people's initiative through the DILG because it is averse to a constitutional convention, and a constituent assembly is unlikely to be convened because of strong opposition from senators.

Gov. Jericho Petilla of Leyte province acknowledged that a signature campaign for amending the Constitution through a people's initiative would be the main agenda in the barangay assemblies.

Petilla told the Inquirer that he had directed all mayors and barangay offi-

CHARTER Page 2

BELINDA ANTE

From Moscow to Saipan

By AGNES E. DONATO REPORTER

Belinda Ante, the Philippines' new consul to the Commonwealth, has not been in a formal classroom in a decade. But she has never stopped learning.

Ante believes that there is something to be learned from everything. And this is precisely how she plans to approach her latest assignment.

Consular work is new to her, she admits in an interview. Her previous assignments involved mainly political and economic reporting from Philippine embassies abroad.

"I did mostly substantive work in my prior assignments. It was more of writing and researching. It was pretty much working on your steam. But consular work is something I have never done before. I'm excited to have this opportunity to deal more closely with the Filipino community and to hone my managerial skills," she says.

Ante also expects to face other challenges in what she thought would be a "laid-back post."

The Northern Marianas, she observes, is different from her previous posts in that the islands have a huge population of Filipino workers needing assistance from the consulate.

She adds that, with the Commonwealth being a small community, diplomatic procedures here are not as defined as, for instance,

BELINDA Page 2



TEAM FAMILY FUN DAY

The force behind the recently concluded Family Fun Day for Overseas Filipino Workers gather for a souvenir photo at the Philippine Overseas Labor Office Thursday afternoon. More than 1,000 OFWs and guests attended the event last Sunday.

OFWs help build 400 classrooms

By VERONICA UY INQ7.NET

Overseas Filipino workers and OFW organizations through their donations have helped build almost 400 classrooms, the target of a government project intended to alleviate a shortage in the country, the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) said Wednesday.

A total of 312 CGMA class-

rooms have been finished, another 62 are in various stages of construction, seven are undergoing school area identification, and 19 are undergoing site validation and documentation prior to construction, said Danilo Cruz, undersecretary for employment and head of the DoLE's Classroom Galing

sa Mamamayan Abroad (Classrooms from OFWs, CGMA) program.

In his report to DoLE Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Cruz said six new classrooms were inaugurated and turned over to Paggulayan Elementary School in Pinamalayan, Oriental

OFWs Page 2



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PINOYNEWS

MOVER embarks on tree planting project

By **JOHN RAVELO**
REPORTER

After completing another environment cleanup project earlier this month, non-profit Filipino group MOVER continues to fulfill its commitment to help the CNMI community by preparing this time for a tree planting project.

MOVER president Jun Lapeceros said his group's volunteers are now ready to go out into the field again to till soil and plant trees to make the tropical islands even greener.

Lapeceros said Saipan's Rotary Club came out with the project concept. He said Rotary's director for community activities, Superior Court Associate Judge Juan T. Lizama, is

finalizing details of the project.

"Rotary Club chose MOVER to be its partner in environmental activities," Lapeceros said. "We are committed to these activities after the three cleanup projects that we completed."

MOVER has over 150 members. Established in 2001 as an organization of Filipino workers in the CNMI, the association has metamorphosed into an environmentalist group, bagging an environmental achievement award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 9 in 2004.

For nine consecutive Sundays from Jan. 8 to March 5 earlier this year, MOVER's volunteers canceled days of relaxation by trooping to Saipan's Hagoi Drive—the road leading to Susupe Lake—and the Tun

Joaquin Road in Chalan Kanoa to pick up trash of all sorts from illegal dumpsites that had added to the tourist island's eyesores.

Volunteers, including some children, went out on the field early in the morning and toiled for hours without pay to fulfill their civic work.

When asked if MOVER volunteers do not get tired from doing voluntary civic work, Lapeceros said: "We just made the cleanup activities our physical exercise. After lunches, we sing karaoke and relax."

MOVER and its volunteers expressed gratitude to those who helped them made their projects a success, including Mobil Oil Mariana Islands Inc., Rotary Club, FOMACON, DFS Galleria, and Pacific Trading Co.



MOVER president Jun S. Lapeceros, 3rd left, with association secretary Nancy Zamora, 3rd right, and Loreto Cabo, 2nd right, receive \$ 1,000 from the Rotary Club of Saipan through its president James N. Whitt, 2nd left, and Rotary Director for Community Activities Judge Juan Lizama, left, to help defray the cost of the association's cleanup project.

Government agencies and officials who provided support included Gov. Benigno Fitial, Lt. Gov. Timothy Villagomez, the office and staff of Saipan

Mayor Juan Borja Tudela, House Speaker Oscar Babauta, Vice Speaker Justo Quitugua, and congressman Jesus Lizama, among many others.

In the past, MOVER also cleaned up stormwater drainages along Saipan's western shores, stretching from San Antonio to San Roque.

CHARTER

FROM PAGE 1

cials in the province to gather the needed signatures in their respective areas during the assemblies.

Gathering signatures dur-

ing the assemblies is the best option, as it will "ensure that these signatures are not manufactured or fabricated," the governor said.

Petilla disclosed that he gave P3,000 in "mobilization fund" to each of the province's

more than 1,400 barangay chairpersons so they could muster the needed signatures. "The funds would come under our provincial aid to the barangay," he said.

At the national directorate meeting of the ruling

Lakas-CMD party in January, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo pushed for a new constitution and a shift to a parliamentary system by the middle of the year.

The Lakas-CMD national directorate rejected former presi-

dent Fidel Ramos' proposal that Ms Arroyo cut short her term in 2007 to pave the way for a parliamentary government.

At the meeting, Speaker Jose de Venecia proposed a French-style transition parliamentary government in which

Ms Arroyo would remain as president but share some of her powers with a prime minister who would be the chief operating officer.

Lakas-CMD members also wanted to extend the terms of elected officials.

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BELINDA

FROM PAGE 1

in Moscow where almost every country has representatives.

There is little doubt, however, that Ante can rise up to the challenge.

For one, she has the education. In 1983, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics from the Philippines' premier state university. In 1997, she completed her master's degree in foreign affairs and trade from the prestigious Monash University in Australia.

Her professional experience also speaks highly of Ante. She worked in both the private sector and in a Philippine government agency before she joined the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1993.

Immediately after obtaining her master's degree in 1997, she was assigned to work as vice consul in Myanmar. She stayed in the Southeast Asian country for nearly four years, during

which she established good relations with both the Myanmar government and the opposition led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

After completing the mandatory two-year home service in Manila, Ante was detailed in Russia, where she served as consul from 2001 to 2003.

Ante arrived on Saipan—her third overseas assignment—exactly a month ago yesterday. She has spent the past month on business matters, calling on the governor, the attorney general, the Labor secretary, and other CNMI government officials.

She hasn't had the chance to see the island's beaches and attractions for herself. But she is no rush. She is looking forward to seeing them one by one during her three-year tour of duty in the islands.

"I'm still sort of acclimatizing myself. Saipan is a bit of a challenge. But I'm sure I will have fun," Ante says.

OFWS

FROM PAGE 1

Mindoro province; Francisco Benitez Elementary School in Tondo, Manila; and Tagulod High School in Candaba East, Pampanga province.

Cruz also acknowledged some of the donors:

Nelida B. Atalig; Visayas Mindanao Association of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI); Filipino Pop Music Club (through E-Money Plus Inc.); Filipino Tenpin Bowlers -- Eastern Region or Filbowlers (Glicerio Tuazon); Upsilon Sigma Phi Fraternity, Northeast USA

(Philippine Consulate General in New York);

Society of Performing Arts-Talents Guild; Merlita Comia through Feed the Hungry Foundation in cooperation with the Commission on Filipinos Overseas; Filipino Computer Club-Dubai; Computer Aided Design and Drafting Group; and the Filipino Association for Computer Excellence.

Cruz said the program was a continuing global initiative of the DoLE in collaboration with the Departments of Education (DepEd), Foreign Affairs (DFA), and the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. (FFCCCII).

Friends holds 'hot lunch' fundraising for Iying

Friends and church mates of Ely "Iying" Wong are holding a hot lunch fundraising today at Saipan Community Church in Susupe to help foot his hospital expenses.

Wong recently went through a major surgery at St. Luke's Hospital in Quezon City, the Philippines, following a near-death accident on Saipan in February this year.



Wong

Teresita Abe, a family friend of the Wongs, said yesterday that they prepared 400 hot lunches for sale today.

Each hot lunch costs \$5.

People can buy and pick up hot lunches at the church parking area in Susupe.

"This is a fundraising event to help the family shoulder the hospital expenses. We want to support them and show them

that we care, especially in this trying time," Abe said.

The surgery, which involved the implantation of defibrillator, a device used to restore the heart's normal beat, costs some \$40,000 [P2 million].

A portion of the cost was shouldered by insurance while a big chunk, some \$32,000, had to be shouldered by the family.

A miracle

In an earlier interview, Wong's wife Millet described her husband's experience as "a great miracle from God."

She said that her husband lost consciousness and was without heartbeat when he was rushed to the Commonwealth Health Center emergency room last February.

The doctor had warned the

family that he may not make it through that night.

But he did. He survived the night and on the next day, he opened his eyes, to the amazement of his family and friends.

On the second day, he was able to turn his head and smile.

"It's a miracle," said Mrs. Wong.

She said she and her church mates kept praying and believed in his recovery.

"I was told that he may not make it. I was told that even if he recovers, he would be a vegetable. But I didn't listen to them. I believed that he would be healed and recover," she said.

She said that, although he was not responding, she would continue talking to her husband.

"I'd like to believe he could hear me. The doctor said, 'I don't think he can hear us.' but I chose to believe in what God can do," said Mrs. Wong.

She said she was touched by the outpouring of support from the community.

"When he woke up, that's when I cried aloud. I was so overjoyed," Mrs. Wong said.

She said several passages in the Bible sustained her during those times.

"I found this verse in Proverbs 3. 'Have no fear of sudden death. The Lord will be your confidence,'" she said.

The Wongs have been living on Saipan since 1988. They

have two children Rezne, 14, and El Nathan, 7.

The Wongs are into the wholesale business, selling dry

goods from the Philippines, Singapore, and Japan.

Mr. Wong, 46, has been an active member of the Saipan Swim Club

and other community activities.

He is currently recuperating in Manila and will be back on Saipan in six months. *(Liberty Dones)*

LABOR FRONT

How to sponsor a relative as tourist

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
REPORTER

Q: What are the requirements in order for an alien worker to sponsor his or her relative to come to the CNMI as a tourist?

A: The sponsoring alien worker should provide the information about the traveler in his or her request for an authorization letter, approved by the Immigration director. The request should include the name of traveler; permanent address; place of employment/occupation-certification of employment; clear copy of the traveler's passport; date of arrival and departure, airline carrier and flight number; purpose of visit; name of location of intended stay; contact number at home or work; police clearance needed if coming from Indonesia and Malaysia; and National Bureau of Investigation clearance if coming from Philippines.

The sponsor should also submit to Immigration about his or her information consisting of an affidavit of support letter which must be notarized; copy of passport; copy of driver's license (if applicable); copy of entry permit; copy of two latest paycheck stubs; business license (if applicable). If a company is the sponsor, a copy of the latest Business Gross Revenue Tax document must be provided.

The sponsor either has \$21,000 annual income or \$3,000 in savings account over the past three to six months. A \$500 cash bond is also required.

An interested worker can get from the Office of the Attorney General Division of Immigration in San Antonio the visitor entry permit application form, a sample of an affidavit of sponsorship and support, and a list of the requirements for a visitor entry permit.

Q: Are guest workers' free to hire own attorney to file civil lawsuits against their employers?

A: Yes. Alien workers can tap attorneys of their choice and file civil lawsuits against their employers. The workers are free to independently contact the Department of Labor with complaints about their work situation. But complaining workers must remember that most contracts require that complaints be first brought to the attention of their employers.

Q: What is at the top of the list of alien worker's rights?

A: Employees cannot work in any other job than that listed in their employment contract.

Submit questions on labor issues to *Saipan Tribune* via e-mail at editor@saipantribune.com, or by calling 235-6397, 235-2440, or 235-8747 and leaving a message at Ext. 133 or 141. You may also submit questions in person by writing it down and dropping it off at the *Saipan Tribune's* office on the second floor of the CIC Centre on Beach Road, Garapan.

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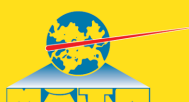
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20 officers in plot face court martial

By **JIM GOMEZ**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippine army said Thursday it has recommended court-martial proceedings against a general and 19 other officers accused in a failed coup plot last month against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Army officials also were assessing possible punitive steps against dozens of soldiers who were allegedly aware of or agreed to join the coup, which included a plan by renegade generals and enlisted personnel to join a protest march, then withdraw support from Arroyo, said army spokesman Maj. Bartolome Bacarro.

The court-martial of Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and 19 officers was recommended by army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon to military chief of staff Gen. Generoso Senga, who will decide whether to approve such action, Bacarro told The Associated Press.

Arroyo said the coup conspiracy, joined by left-wing and right-wing groups and quelled by the government on Feb. 24, would have destroyed democracy in the Philippines if it had triumphed.

She imposed a state of emergency after the coup plot fizzled, and lifted it on March 3 following strong protests from the opposition and civil libertarians.



Leftist congressmen, from left, Teodoro Casino, Satur Ocampo, Liza Masa, Rafael Mariano and Joel Virador, clench their fists as they arrive at the Department of Justice in Manila on Thursday March 23, 2006 for a preliminary investigation on their alleged participation in the alleged failed coup plot last February 24. The lawmakers have been holding themselves up at the Lower House to evade arrest by the military. The hearing was conducted as the Philippine army on Thursday has recommended court-martial proceedings against a general and 19 other officers for their alleged role in last month's failed coup plot against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

An investigation showed that Lim, who headed the army's elite Scout Ranger Regiment, and the other officers backed the coup plot in ways that violated the Articles of War—offenses

punishable by removal from service and imprisonment—officials said.

“All of them have varying degrees of participation. All of them have corresponding violation of the Articles of

War,” Bacarro said.

Those recommended to face court-martial were picked out from at least 59 army officers and 37 enlisted personnel who were investigated, officials said.

Lim, a U.S.-trained officer who has been linked to past coup attempts, and marine Col. Ariel Querubin allegedly told Senga on the eve of the planned Feb. 24 coup that they and other soldiers planned to march from their camps to join pro-democracy protests marking the 1986 “people power” revolt that ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos, officials said.

Lim has been relieved of his post and restricted to military quarters. Querubin and an unspecified number of marines are separately being investigated by the navy.

Under the coup plan, renegade officers and enlisted personnel would withdraw support from Arroyo at the height of the protests to be joined by soldiers. Other military rebels would later launch strikes on government targets to topple Arroyo and install a civilian-military caretaker government, Senga said.

Arroyo has urged the 117,000-strong military, which has been beset with restiveness and has a recent history of failed coup attempts, to stick to the chain of command, citing the damage that army uprisings cause to the economy.

While the coup plotters have been largely beaten, anti-government groups could still plot a new coup against Arroyo, Senga said. “We may have not seen the last of the attempts at power grab,” he said Tuesday.

RP court postpones hearing of 4 Marines

By **TERESA CERJOJANO**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A court on Thursday postponed the arraignment of four U.S. Marines accused of rape after the alleged victim's lawyer filed a motion claiming a link between the presiding judge and the defense attorneys.

Judge Renato Dilag, in the western city of Olongapo, announced that he was withdrawing from the case to erase any doubts about his impartiality. He said the hearing, scheduled for Friday, would be deferred and handled by a new judge.

The complainant, a 22-year-old Filipino woman, claims she was raped by Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith on Nov. 1 while

three other Marines cheered him on.

Smith and his co-defendants, Lance Cpl. Keith Silkwood, Lance Cpl. Dominic Duplantis and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier, belong to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Force stationed in Okinawa, Japan. They face capital charges of rape and conspiracy to commit rape.

The U.S. Embassy, which has custody of the men under an agreement governing large-scale American military exercises in the Philippines, hasn't released their ages or hometowns.

Smith has admitted to “consensual sex” with the woman. The three other men have acknowledged they were in a van with Smith and the woman, but denied any rape took place.

A motion filed Thursday asked Dilag to excuse himself from the case for his

failure to disclose that his son used to be an associate at Rodrigo Berenguer and Gulo Law Offices, which is representing Carpentier.

Dilag said his son resigned from the firm in August 2004.

“I just want to dispel any doubts regarding my future actions regarding this case,” Dilag told The Associated Press.

Benjamin Formoso, Smith's lawyer, said any delay in the case would be bad for his client.

The rape case is seen as a black mark for the U.S. military in the Philippines, which has been credited with helping weaken al-Qaida-linked militants in the south. The Marines were on liberty after counterterrorism maneuvers with Filipino troops when the alleged rape occurred.

Fire razes Zamboanga shantytown; thousands homeless, no casualties

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines (AP)—A huge fire swept through a slum overnight in a southern Philippine city, destroying more than 1,500 wooden homes but causing no casualties, officials said Friday.

Fanned by strong winds, the six-hour blaze quickly spread from one block to another, engulfing narrow roads and alleys of downtown Zamboanga city in a thick smoke before it was put out around 1 a.m. Friday.

Low water pressure from hydrants and inadequate equipment hampered firefighters, local fire chief Janice

Espero said.

“The fire ate up an estimated six hectares (15 acres) of residential areas. It was the worst so far,” said Rep. Erico Basilio Fabian, from Zamboanga, about 850 kilometers (530 miles) south of Manila.

Local officials converted four schools into temporary shelters for the thousands who were displaced.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known, and officials estimated the damage at about 50 million pesos (US\$980,000; €814,000).

Garcillano: Why blame fake passport on me?

By **MICHAEL LIM UBAC**
and **PHILIP C. TUBEZA**
INQUIRER

The man at the center of the purported fraud that marked the 2004 presidential polls expressed bewilderment yesterday over the finding of the central bank, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), that a passport he had submitted to the joint House inquiry on the “Hello, Garci” scandal was fake.

The BSP prints all Philippine passports for the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Reached yesterday by phone at his farm in the southern province of Bukidnon, former election commissioner Virgilio Garcillano said that before he turned the passport (No. JJ243816) over to the five House committees that conducted the probe, he had been holding it since it was issued in 2002.

“It has always been in my possession

... kept at my residence in Barangay Kauswagan, Cagayan de Oro City,” he said, pointing out that the passport was issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs satellite office in that city.

Garcillano, 68, claimed that when he submitted his two passports to the joint inquiry, he believed they were “genuine.”

He took issue with Rep. Gilbert Remulla, former lead chair of the House probe, who had said that the BSP findings “strongly indicate a conspiracy to cover up” the alleged election fraud.

“What conspiracy?” Garcillano said. “What does the passport have to do with cheating? Even if I traveled outside the country, which I don't accept, can it prove cheating? I said it once and say it again: I don't accept doing any actions to help GMA [President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo] cheat.”

Garcillano assailed the opposition

for supposedly forgetting that the purpose of the House inquiry was “to find out if there was cheating” based on wiretapped conversations between him and Ms Arroyo.

“My passport was in the committees' possession for more than three months now. Suddenly, they will say it [is fake],” he said.

“How could I have tampered [with] that? I have nothing to do with it because I did not issue the passport to myself. I don't even know how a passport is made,” he added.

Garcillano said he did not want to impute malice on the part of DFA officials.

“They have been doing their job quite well. I'm not charging the DFA with anything. But I don't know how it came about. If it's fake, which I don't accept, why would they blame it on me? I myself am surprised,” he said.

Singson says Estrada failed as witness

From the way he is going about defending himself, deposed President Joseph Estrada is bound to be convicted, according to Estrada's estranged buddy, Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis ‘Chavit’ Singson, who judged the jailed former president's much-awaited testimony in his plunder trial a miserable failure.

“His testimony is all denial,” said Singson, noting that Estrada failed to take the legal upper hand when he took the witness stand last Wednesday.

“We have a paper trail,” said Singson, the government's star witness in the Estrada trial.

He noted that his testimony that P130 billion in tobacco excise taxes went as kickbacks to Estrada was supported by documents covering the transfer of the funds from the Land Bank of the Philippines branch in Vigan to the Shaw Blvd. branch.

Singson had testified that the funds had been withdrawn from the Landbank Shaw branch and allegedly given

to Estrada in 2000.

In his defense on Wednesday, Estrada said he could not have stolen the money intended for tobacco farmers.

Singson said Estrada was lying and that the truth was bound to come out when the prosecution gets to question him on cross-examination.

Aside from the paper trail on the excise tax kickbacks, Singson said Estrada's strictness about keeping records of the alleged jueteng payoffs to him proved to be his undoing as an accountant's ledger became one of the prosecution's key pieces of evidence.

“He wanted everything to be taken down, that's why we have a ledger. He didn't know it would be used against him,” Singson said.

As to Estrada's claim that they were never bosom friends, Singson said: “How come he stood as principal sponsor at my son's wedding? How come I am godfather to his son by Laarni [Enriquez]?” (*Inquirer*)

PINOYSTYLE

Martin Nievera during his concert here on Saipan last year.

‘Don’t bench me’

Martin unhappy about diminished role on ‘ASAP’

By MARINEL R. CRUZ
INQUIRER

“There’s so much I can do with or without the show having to be about me. I’m one of those players who can make the three-point shot. If you want me on your team, use me; don’t bench me.”

Martin Nievera was telling a group of entertainment writers on Saturday how neglected he was feeling for being one of the “less-used artists” on ABS-CBN’s Sunday noontime variety show, “ASAP ’05.”

Martin, his ex-wife Pops Fernandez, Ariel Rivera and former Miss Universe Dayanara Torres, were the first hosts of the program launched in the early ’90s.

The current edition of the show has over 30 hosts led by Zsa Zsa Padilla, Gary Valenciano and Kuh Ledesma.

“Back then, everything revolved around [the four main hosts],” Martin recalled. “Now, [I’m among] the less-used artists. Tomorrow (Sunday, March 19) I’m singing Adam Sandler’s ‘Grow

Old With You’ for the [segment on the] wedding of Claudine [Barretto] and Raymart [Santiago]. I have an album of wedding songs that became a double gold, and I have to sing that?”

Interviewed later, Deo Endrinal, network vice president for Talk, Variety, and Reality argued that Martin had committed only six dates for “ASAP” this year—two in February, three in April and one in May.

Theory

Endrinal said the production team hadn’t counted on Martin’s availability on March 19. “We were told a week earlier. We couldn’t just suddenly change the concept of the show, which was for Claudine. We asked Martin to sing Raymart’s favorite song.”

Martin had a theory: “If you ask ABS-CBN why these things are happening, they’ll say, ‘It’s because Martin is never here.’ Try throwing me an offer—don’t wait for me to be available.”

“Martin is like an icon for the program,” Endrinal conceded. “We’d like to honor him as often as possible, [to mark] every milestone in his career. We know that his dream is to really make it big internationally. We’re always here to help him promote himself.”

Martin stressed that he didn’t want out: “I’m not telling the people [running the show] how to do their jobs; I’m offering my services. If you need another male host, I’m your guy.”

He added: “Believe it or not, I’m very faithful. I’m a team player. Do you know how many offers I’ve gotten from the other side? A lot. They’re offering me a lot more than what I’m making right now. ABS-CBN has never offered me a contract.”

The gathering on Saturday was to announce Martin’s fundraising concert on March 29 at the Manila Peninsula in Makati City, to benefit 9-month-old Gaia Bianca Pasamba, who needs a liver transplant.

Do your fans notice?

I get a lot of feedback from fans. They ask, ‘Why did this one get a solo and you didn’t?’ I tell them, ‘Don’t worry about it. It’s a team effort.’ It’s because of the fans that I feel this way. They expect something, for instance, a homecoming welcome. It’s not as if I’m on the show every weekend. I wish they’d do their homework naman. You watch: if I hit it big in the US, they’ll be promoting me on ‘ASAP.’

What are your plans for the year?

On April 15, I’ll do another fundraiser in Los Angeles with MiG Ayesa and other Filipino artists who are in the US now—for the Leyte landslide victims. In May, I’m touring Europe with Pops... then Las Vegas in July.

How did you get involved in the fundraiser for Gaia?

My sister Tere’s son, who goes to the International School, came home one day feeling depressed. He said his teacher, Gaia’s father, had a problem. A lot of people ended up wanting to help, and it snowballed into a show. The baby could go under the knife on the very day of the performance.

Will you henceforth be concerned about helping people?

You’ve got to start somewhere. I lost my father to a similar disease. Hopefully my name still has some pull. Once, in Japan, I asked a group, ‘If I kissed you on the lips, how much would you give me?’ I raised \$5,000 for typhoon victims, which I donated to the ABS-CBN Foundation. By the end of that tour, I had donated almost \$20,000. But did ABS-CBN know I did that? It’s not important. I just want you to see that I am a team player.

Is there anything else you dream of as a performer?

I want to be really big and come back to this country, my hometown, and do a big show with an orchestra for free. It would be fully produced but I will not charge a cent. That’s when you know you’re a big star.

Filipino wins world jazz tilt in London

By TONETTE OREJAS
INQUIRER

SAN FERNANDO—Once again, a Filipino is the best of ‘em.

Jazz singer Mon David won the grand prize in the prestigious London International Jazz Competition last Wednesday, besting 106 vocalists from 27 countries.

The 52-year-old native of Pampanga province began his performance at the finals—held at the Cadogan Hall in London’s Sloane Square—with a few bars of an ethnic chant, singing a cappella the first lines of “Nature Boy,” and then crooning “My One and Only Love” and “Lullaby of Birdland.”

As LIJC Jazz Vocalist 2006, David will receive 1,000 euros (nearly P90,000) and take on engagements at the Jagz in

Ascot and the 606 Club in Chelsea.

Confirming on Thursday news of his winning, David told his friends in Pampanga that in his spiel, he shared his “amazement at how music can transcend borders and cultural differences, how it can bring people together, how it can truly set us free.”

Said David’s 19-year-old daughter Nikki: “We were asking him if he had felt like he won it after he performed. He said he knew he had connected with the audience and with his band. He was able to get them hooked from the beginning. He wasn’t consumed by nervousness and anxiety because he really enjoyed performing. At a certain point, he said he was in a trance.”

Only Asian

David was the only Asian among the 12

who made it to the finals. (At the March 18 semifinals, he sang “Waltz for Debby,” “No More Blues” and “Skylark.”)

He outdid Dan Barnett and Karlie Bruce of Australia, Torsten Goods of Germany, and Heidi Martin and Alison Wedding of the United States.

The finalists were scored on intonation, jazz vocal sound, time feel, interpretation and phrasing, innovation concept, improvisation and convincing stage presence.

The judges included Lee Gibson and Tina May, described as “two of Britain’s finest jazz vocalists and educators,” LIJC executive director Ursula Malewski, jazz vocalist Ian Shaw, and Pete Churchill and Adam Sieff, jazz consultants with Sony BMG Music International, Dune Records and DDE Records.

Scenes from a ‘tiangge’

“BAYARAN mo muna yan, ‘day,” Annabelle Rama called to a woman who seemed to be sneaking out with an orange gown.

It was one of the unexpected scenes at the Market! Market Trade Hall on Saturday’s “Celebrity Tiangge for Leyte,” organized by Annabelle’s daughter Ruffa Gutierrez, to raise funds for the recent mudslide victims.

The gown, created by Inno Sotto for Ruffa, was sold for P4,000.

Ruffa recounted another fun mo-

ment, this one during the auction: “We announced that the bidding would start at P1,000. Someone shouted, ‘P500!’ We had to explain, ‘Pataas po ang bidding.’”

Gretchen Barretto auctioned off five gowns; Kuh Ledesma donated one. Gary Valenciano gave an Armani jacket. Ruffa’s nude evening dress was the top seller: Iza Calzado bought it for P7,500.

Quickly running out of goods, Donita Rose, who shared a booth with Heart Evangelista, proceeded

to charge snapshot hunters P10 each for the kitty.

Twins Richard and Raymond Gutierrez found their stuff wiped out by 3:45 p.m. Jennifer Sevilla sold colorful wigs. Dina Bonnevie and daughter Danica Sotto set up a fortune-teller’s booth.

In 10 days, Ruffa reported, her group raised P1 million.

“Friends who didn’t make it this time around are suggesting a Part 2,” Ruffa said. “It’s hard work, but it’s worth it.” (*Inquirer*)

RP shines in Fribourg

By BAYANI SAN DIEGO JR.
INQUIRER

It was a Brazilian juror—actress, producer and director Paloma Rocha—who fought “vigorously” for Filipino filmmaker Lav Diaz’s “Heremias,” which went on to win the Special Jury Prize at the 20th Fribourg International Film Festival, held March 12 to 19 in Switzerland.

This was disclosed to Inquirer Entertainment by award-winning Filipino screenwriter and FIFF jury member Jose F. Lacaba.

There were five jurors in all, Lacaba said, and every single one stayed for the whole screening, which included snack and dinner breaks. The movie—about a farmer who makes a pact with God to save a girl—is eight hours long.

Apart from Diaz’s epic, 11 other Filipino digital films were showcased at the Fribourg fest, established in 1980 and originally called “Third World Film Festival.”

Then and now, the film fest “aims to promote quality films...primarily from Asia, Africa and Latin America,” according to Evelyn Vargas-Knaebel, programmer of the Filipino section dubbed “Panorama Philippines: Digital Cinema from Revolution to Ebolusyon.”

“In previous years, movies from

Central Asia (2004) and Palestine/Israel (2005) were presented in a comprehensive program,” Knaebel explained. “This year, we selected 11 films from the Philippines ... all [shedding light] on the complexity of Filipino life.”

Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil, whose “Mga Pusang Gala” was part of the RP section, participated in a forum on Pinoy cinema, along with Diaz and Lacaba.

Lacaba reported that, since the Fribourg crowd was mostly unaware of Pinoy movies, the discussion became an introduction, too, tackling the industry’s history, and its present problems.

Marfil told the audience: “The local film industry used to produce over 200 films yearly, but only 10 had been invited to film fests abroad. Last year, we [released] only 50 to 60 films, but half of them—24 to 30—has so far been invited abroad.”

It was Marfil’s first time to screen her debut film before a foreign audience. “Norwegian critic Jorunn Stone Johansen told me that she laughed and cried throughout the screening.”

For his part, Diaz recounted that, apart from the jurors, serious film enthusiasts saw “Heremias” in full.

“I was trying to catch real time [in making the movie]—the rhythm of rural life,” he said.

The pitch of success

By **NINI VALERA**
INQUIRER

She would discuss almost anything you might want to know about her—how often she needed to wash her hair, what scent she wore, her first attempt at baking a banana cake, or how well she made roast beef (this last one according to her mom).

But Kris Aquino would hold back a little about her fiancé, James Yap.

“Let’s not talk about the wedding,” she pleaded with Inquirer Entertainment. “Or the money.” It’s a given, she said, that she earns more than the guard of the Purefoods basketball team.

What she would divulge was a tentative plan for a church ceremony, perhaps in December.

The national fascination for Kris Aquino continues. She is seen on television daily in “Game Ka Na Ba?” plus on Sundays as one of the hosts on the “The Buzz.”

Kris, 35, had an explanation for her popularity: “Whether they like me or not, I’m honest.”

Six years ago, Kris, who had just broken off with Phillip Salvador, father of her 10-year-old son Joshua, seemed to be at the end of her career.

“No advertiser would touch me,” she admitted. Only a brand of shoe polish brought her back into the elite circle of celebrity endorsers in 2000.

Turnaround

These days, Kris—equally famous for her vanity and her chatter—is pitching 17 products, from the obscure San-San cosmetics to the high-profile clothing line Bench to the institutional macho badge that is San Miguel Beer Pale Pilsen. The latest is the new variant of Pantene shampoo.

Yes, she said, these products are found in her house—in her bathroom, for instance, Kissa Papaya soap; in her pantry, Purefoods corned beef.

“My staff has a list of all the products I endorse,” said Kris. “Even in my mom’s house—the products I endorse are the ones she buys.”

Kris related an incident involving corned beef. Her mom, former president Cory Aquino, had been aghast when, one day, the housekeeper brought home from the grocery the brand of corned beef that Boy Abunda, not Kris, endorsed.

“My mom asked why the majordoma bought that; the answer was, because it was

cheaper by 20 centavos,” said Kris.

Boy Abunda, Kris’ best friend, was so amused by the anecdote, he sent President Cory three cases of “his” corned beef brand.

Before she was signed up for Pantene, she related, she was asked to fill out a five-page questionnaire that came from Malaysia. “I told Boy, who closed the deal, that I felt like I was auditioning and I didn’t like that,” Kris recounted. I told him to just send to them pictures of all my billboards on Edsa.”

(This was not the biggest deal for Kris, though, she admitted: “San Miguel was.”)

Since shooting the commercial in Bangkok last year, Kris has darkened her hair, to the consternation of Direk Chito Rono, who hasn’t finished shooting a movie with her and Claudine Barretto. He pointed out that she couldn’t have brown hair in one scene and black in the next!

“He was really annoyed,” Kris said.

At the moment, that’s the only downside to Kris’ almost perfect life.

“I like myself best now,” she said. “When you’re in your 30s and at the peak of your beauty, and you know you’ve done something with your life but you’re still excited about each day ... I like it that James is here. He’s supportive and calm.”



Kris Aquino would discuss almost anything you might want to know about her but would hold back a little about her fiancé, James Yap.

‘No, I didn’t!’

By **MARINEL R. CRUZ**
INQUIRER

“I wouldn’t yell at anyone just because I got booted out of a game show. My parents did not raise me to behave that way.”

Actress and commercial model Bianca King was reacting to tabloid news that she screamed at the studio audience and walked out of the set of QTV’s game show “Now Na.”

Bianca said she found it odd that the news surfaced only recently, when the supposed “Now Na” episode was taped two months ago. Reports published two weeks ago said the actress got irked when the studio audience chose her, from among four contestants, to get the boot.

“I’m not mataray,” Bianca told Inquirer Entertainment in a phone interview on Friday. “I could never do that to the audience. My parents—we’re not rich people—taught me to be respectful always.”

Bianca said she has been helping her parents Bryan and Suzy with home expenses since she was 16 (she was a commercial model at 14). “My dad’s 60 now; I don’t want him to be working anymore. People think we’re well-off because I went to a good school. I was just lucky. And I can mingle with the rich as well as hang out with the poor.”

Bianca turned 20 on March 18. She celebrated by joining Ruffa Gutierrez and other show biz celebrities in a fund-raiser for the survivors of the recent killer mudslide in Southern Leyte. Ruffa had organized the day-long “Celebrity Tiangge for Leyte” at the Market! Market! in Taguig City.

On the same day, Bianca also took the entrance exam for an arts management college course. “I’m setting my priorities—I’m going back to school. But I’m not entirely leaving show biz.”

Bianca was last seen in “Mulawin, The Movie.” Starting March 26, she will be on the teen program “Love to Love,” season 10.

Sexbomb’s ‘last dance’

By **DOLLY ANNE CARVAJAL**
INQUIRER

A concerned friend of Joy Cancio defends Sexbomb’s beleaguered manager regarding the group’s departure from the noon-time show “Eat Bulaga.”

The amiga lamented: “My heart goes out to Joy because people blame her. In fact, she was the one bypassed by Sugar and her mom. When Sugar’s contract expired she didn’t bother to inform Joy that she had a management deal with TAPE Inc. To think that Joy had taken Sugar back even though she had joined a rival group (‘Kendeng Girls’ of the ‘Pera o Bayong’ portion of ‘MTB’).”

Joy’s pal continued: “Sugar is playing the underdog to gain public sympathy. She’s shedding crocodile tears! One more thing, Joy didn’t order her girls not to appear in a show at Klowns. She was told that the show had been cancelled. I pity her; she’s up against powerful people.”

The friend says the public should be fair and give Joy credit for Sexbomb’s success.

Is it possible for Sexbomb to return to “Bulaga”? The friend sighed, “Joy is open but she received a text from a TAPE bigwig that sounded final.”

If so, the Sexbomb dancers shouldn’t act as if they’ve performed their “last dance.”

They only need to dance to a different beat and reinvent themselves. “Dance like nobody’s watching,” as my fave quote goes.

But as far as the Sexbombs are concerned, they need to dance because everybody’s watching.

(Catch them Wednesdays at Laffline and Thursdays at Punchline.)

Just asking

“Moments of Love” has an uncanny resemblance to a “Twilight Zone” story called “A Message For Charity.” Is it pure coincidence?

Could it be true that Rico Robles almost backed out of “Pinoy Big Brother” when he found out that Roxie Barcelo was one of the housemates? They got too close for comfort when Roxie was a “practicumer” in RX 93, where Rico is a DJ. Now that they’ve both been evicted, they’re still bickering. What’s with this strange duo? Neither friends nor lovers? But if they are “insignificant others,” why are they both affected by what the other does or doesn’t do?

Did you know that the upcoming movie “D Lucky Ones” was supposed to be entitled “I Love You, Lucky?” But Vilma Santos requested Star Cinema not to use her signature line because she’s reserving

it for a play.

I wonder who Lucky (Luis Manzano) loves. He’s been linked to Nancy Castiglione, Toni Gonzaga and Karel Marquez? I remember teasing him about KC Concepcion, too.

He just smiles and says, “I think even before we were born, KC and I were already being paired because of our moms.” Wouldn’t they make a mega couple for all seasons?

On “PBB,” Rustom Padilla had the guts to admit that he’s gay (though he didn’t really have to state the obvious). I wonder if another housemate (evicted or not—make a wild guess) will have the courage to let his/her dark secret out. A real turn off! It will make his/her followers turn the TV off.

Guess who’s this beauty queen who’s a certified kleptomaniac. A schoolmate of hers told me that, during their college days, she was ordered by the principal to apologize to the entire student body for all the stuff that she had stolen. She’s also a scene-stealer. The beauty queen gets a kick out of telling everybody that an award-winning actor is her boyfriend. But when I asked the actor about her, he said that they split up a long time ago. Is the klepto in her raring to steal him away from his current girl?

Disco excess

Groove to Hed Kandi Classic Hits on March 31, 9 p.m., at the World Trade Center. Call 726-2523 or 723-8673



Piolo Pascual

Ties that bind Piolo and mom

By **NINI VALERA**
INQUIRER

Amelia Pascual tends to chat up every pretty girl she meets, and then drags her youngest son J to meet the girl.

“If I could, I would be distributing copies of my son’s bio-data in the United States—one for every potential girlfriend,” said Amy. “That’s how much I want to see him get married. I even talk to flight attendants and get them interested in meeting my son.”

People might think Amy crazy for playing cupid to her son, who happens to be heartthrob Piolo Pascual. J is her pet name for him.

“That’s the irony,” she said. “He’s Piolo Pascual—you’d think he could get any girl he fancied. But that’s

not the case. He does not want just any girl.”

Piolo was amused at his mom’s declarations to Inquirer Entertainment in an interview last week. Amy is based in the US.

Earlier, Piolo, who turned 29 last January, admitted that he was looking for a girl to settle down with. He thought it could be Toni Gonzaga.

“[But] I’d like her to develop as herself first...then we’ll see,” the actor said.

A few years back, Pops Fernandez admitted she was dating him.

It’s a tough act for a girl to get into the groove with Piolo—even tougher when you bring Mom Amy into the equation.

“He still sleeps in my bed when we’re together,” revealed Amy. She said Piolo is the best child a mother

could hope for. She raised all her six children on her own after her husband Philip died at age 46. She is now in her 60s.

“The most important thing to us is family,” Amy said. “It’s hard that most of us are in the US, and Piolo has his career here. But whenever he asks, I come to visit.

The last time Piolo asked was in January. Amy had just flown back to the US with her daughter Ana Carmina.

“I didn’t think he was serious,” she recalled. But Piolo had insisted, saying that they had a deal for a TV commercial—together.

A day after Amy’s return to Manila, they posed for pictures for Selecta Ice Cream ads and also did a TV commercial. The camera-shy Amy cringed with each take.

Even so, Piolo declared, “My mother is a natural.”

OPINYON

Why restrict the overseas Filipino professional?

“Regulate the exodus of skills and talents! Keep the best and the brightest at home!” screamed the banner of a full-page, paid ad that appeared in the Inquirer the other day.

That call was issued by a group calling itself the Fair Trade Alliance. It asks that we regulate the migration of Filipino professionals and highly skilled workers.

I share their concerns, but not their conclusion. You can only control people’s dreams at your own peril. Fair trade means that traders must be free to compete in the open market, and workers should be just as free to seek the highest value for their labor, locally or abroad. What is sauce for the capitalist goose should be sauce for the proletarian gander, even those whose labors are mental and not menial.

“Overseas employment, the nation’s economic lifeline, is turning into its gravedigger.” The figures indeed are staggering: 5 million overseas migrant workers and 3 million immigrants, sending remittances to support one-fourth of the population. The FTA warns that the continued outflow of talent has begun to “decimate [our] few but vital industries” and jeopardize basic services like health and education. The depletion of “mission-critical skills” has imperiled our hospitals, with a low nurse-to-patient ratio. And, most critical of all (and which may explain the full-page ad), our aviation industry has suffered from “foreign poaching” of trained pilots and aviation mechanics, and, in terms of investments in “experiential learning,” the FTA estimates losses of P1 million for each pirated Filipino pilot and around P500,000 for each purloined mechanic.

The portents are scary indeed, but the remedies are just as worrisome. The FTA proposes the “stricter regulation of the outflow of critical skills and talents in crucial and strategic industries.” That is technocrat talk for “Catch them at the airport.” A National Service Act will restrict the migration of “mission-critical

cal professionals,” and require them to render some sort of compulsory community service for a few years.

There is, to start with, a minor hitch known as the Bill of Rights, which ensures every Filipino’s “right to travel.” International human rights treaties speak of it as the “right to leave and to return,” and the Supreme Court held that since the Constitution merely said “to travel,” that excluded the “to return” part. Well anyway, that’s what it took to bar Ferdinand Marcos from returning to the Philippines. By whatever interpretation, the right “to travel” still includes the right “to leave,” and that is the only part of the Bill of Rights that any aspiring Filipino illegal alien cares

train more nurses. After all, there are 84 million Filipinos; if even just 5 percent of us are of trainable age and competence, that’s already 4 million skilled brains. And if there is real demand overseas for their God-given talents, let them go where those talents are justly remunerated.

Perhaps the real problem is our schools, and our attitude toward diplomas and degrees. Students learn fancy skills for non-existent jobs, and end up jobless or underemployed. They learn Shakespeare in the land of Pepe and Pilar. Either we match our schools’



Passion For Reason

By RAUL PANGALANGAN
INQUIRER

that we can democratize admissions without diluting academic standards. Having been a teacher for more than 20 years, I have no illusions about Filipino students. But I have no illusions, either, about admissions tests: Maybe Albert Einstein might have flunked the UPCAT or NMAT admission tests—af-

ter all, he said that “imagination is more important than knowledge.”

The FTA is correct that a return-service requirement should cover the societal investment in their education, but to enforce it by law would only create a class of bright but frustrated Filipinos chafing at their chains and hating the world, a perfect recruiting pool for terrorists and coup plotters.

But there is nothing to stop us from enforcing a return-service obligation, not by law, but by voluntary contract. For example, professors of the University of the Philippines (UP) who are sent abroad on fellowships at the university’s expense are tied down to a return-service requirement. By and large, professors have honored this obligation. There are some “Reneging Fellows,” as they are officially called, but I trust that the university’s lawyers diligently check on these deadbeat academics that have in effect run away with taxpayers’ money.

This system of voluntary contracts must extend to UP’s own graduates. Their education is heavily subsidized, but that subsidy is invisible. It leads to a sense of entitlement by the beneficiaries (indeed, a Darwinian sense of achievement that they beat others to the subsidy), and a lack of appreciation for the taxpayers who shouldered the true cost of their education.

It takes a village to raise a child. Then let the child know how much thanks he owes the village.

Comments to passionforreason@gmail.com.

‘You can only control people’s dreams at your own peril. Fair trade means that traders must be free to compete in the open market, and workers should be just as free to seek the highest value for their labor, locally or abroad. What is sauce for the capitalist goose should be sauce for the proletarian gander, even those whose labors are mental and not menial.’

about right now.

At best, then, any return-service requirement needs to be custom-tailored to the nation’s needs. The period of compulsory service should be fixed and limited, and the covered professions must be confined solely to those truly in crisis.

However, if the problem is the drying up of the supply of professionals, then by all means let us increase the supply. If there is a shortage of nurses, let us open more nursing schools and

supply with the job market’s demand, or we accept it as perfectly legitimate—as indeed it is—that college students learn Shakespeare and then affect a Midwestern American accent in a call center.

I think the real fear is that to increase the supply of skilled brainworkers, we must settle for the lesser brained, and that the only way to maintain quality control is to limit access to the professions. I firmly believe

Liberation from history

History often seems so distant, so far away to be of use in our daily lives. This is why I require my students to dig up and read the newspapers that came out on the day they were born. Without prodding, the students see parallels between the past and the present and realize, sadly, that the world has not changed very much in the past two decades.

If they are diligent, they can go back 200 or 2,000 years and still see similarities. It seems we have not learned anything from history at all, and that is a very depressing thought indeed. It is one thing to know the past, but knowing what to do with it is something else. Our aim should be to be liberated from our history.

For the past two weeks, I have been sorting out the books that have overgrown my bookshelves, files that have outgrown the boxes and filing cabinets where they were planted years ago. I have so much material in storage that I do not have to go out and do research in a library or archive to write this column, but the thrill is in the chase. Once you have found what you are looking for, you search for something else.

One day, I found a bundle of 3” x 5” index cards that was standard issue for research in the last century. Today, we have laptops, palm tops, cell phones and other handy devices that make life much easier but do not replace the actual hands-on research work.

I have dug up a whole pile of notes from the 1926 Philippines Free Press and this made some

very engaging reading. Old news is still current.

There is an ongoing hunt for that schoolteacher who punished her students by forcing them to eat pencil shavings. This would not have been noticed, except that one of the children died. So much for corporal punishment. In 1926 Lazaro Yumul, a principal in Concepcion town in the province of Tarlac, conducted a survey where 265 of the 700 pupils who answered a questionnaire said they had been whipped. All the 132 primary school students opposed corporal punishment. When asked to explain why, their answer was simple and direct to the point: “It hurts!”

In the intermediate grades, 89 said they had experienced corporal punishment. But while 64 opposed corporal punishment, 23 accepted it as atonement for a wrong done, and 46 even said the pain would make them better! The 64 who opposed corporal punishment explained their position as follows: 30 said, “It hurts”; 18 said, “I didn’t do anything to warrant the rod”; six respondents said the punishment made them angry; five disagreed with being whipped; and five cried injustice.

One wonders how students today would answer the same questionnaire, but an interesting question Yumul asked was: “If you are stronger [and bigger], what will you do to a parent who

whipped you?” A total of 80 students said they would run away from home; four said they would become naughtier to get even, three said they would refuse to do [household and school] work [and chores]; three said they would get angry; three would refuse to eat; and two would apologize. It is significant to note that two respondents said they would apologize for their wrongdoing and 47 would actually be sorry for any wrong they had done. On the other hand, 58 said they would patiently endure the pain while 41 said they would try to please the parent who spanked them.

Many Filipinos today are not in favor of corporal punishment anymore, and it seems we have relaxed on many things as well, especially sex. However, there is

a group of self-proclaimed guardians of morality who are now reacting and hounding the MTRCB [board of censors] for approving the films “Brokeback Mountain” and “Munich.” I have not seen either film, so I will reserve comment for later, but this kind of thinking goes all the way back to 1926 when there was a moral crusade against “kissing.”

In 1926, it was popular to wear an inverted question mark formed from a lock of hair on the forehead of women, called the “kiss-me lock.” It was described as a modern-day mistletoe,



Looking Back

By AMBETH OCAMPO
INQUIRER

and guardians of morality were against it. Generoso Ruiz wrote a letter to the Philippines Free Press, wailing:

“...[W]here have you seen in this God’s country of ours a typical Filipina over whom Rizal and Luna went into raptures, allowing herself to be kissed by her lover publicly, or even privately, by the light of the silver moon?”

“...[T]he Filipino girl’s modesty and coyness forbids such extravagances. Possibly among forward Filipino girls, who have aped modern -- imported -- customs. Those of the demimonde class, where the last vestige of Filipino maidenhood and purity has fallen and given way to the power of jazz and jazz-made customs, such kissing scenes may be found, perhaps. But these Filipino girls, mind you, are not the typical Filipino girls I refer to. The rouged and bobhead-haired girls are an anachronism in our Philippine life -- a part of the deluge progress has brought to the Filipinos, something that reminds you of the Spanish saying ‘No hay mal que por bien no venga.’”

“...[W]e may have woman suffrage in this country, which is another evil brought by progress, we may have bobbed-hair and jazz, but for heaven’s sake, let us not parade before the public promiscuous scenes with kissing in them that are not true to life.”

One can only guess what planet Mr. Ruiz came from. History, at least, shows us that we have progressed in many ways.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu.

SAMU'T SARI



Filipino families are all delighted during the fun event for all Filipinos in the CNMI.



Children of the Filipino workers in the CNMI also joined during the Family Fun Day at the American Memorial Park for fun games and other activities.



MITA Travel and Western Union Garapan Branch staff are all smiles during the fun event giving away leaflets and brochures to the OFWs.



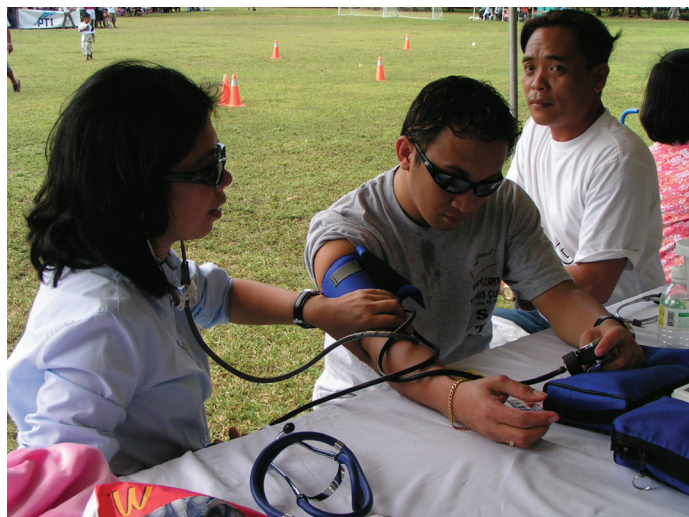
Breakdancing and hip hopping on the grounds of the American Memorial Park, EQ Fusion delights the crowd with its fancy moves.



NMC Nursing Club members and advisers pose for a souvenir photo during the Family Fun Day event at the American Memorial Park.



EQ Fusion Dance group, composed of children of OFWs in the CNMI, showcased their flair in breakdancing during the event.



Filipino worker Edwin Maratas takes a blood pressure level test from the NMC Nursing Club member during the Family Fun Day.



UFO DONATION

The United Filipino Organization donates a plane ticket to Guam for John Pineda, Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School's Spelling Bee alternate, so he could attend the 2006 Scripps Regional Spelling Bee competition held March 18 at the Hilton Guam Resort & Spa.